

MONROE COLLEGE

Life After Graduation: A Workshop for F-1 Students



Know Your DSOs at Monroe College

- DSO = a “Designated School Official” dedicated to helping international students maintain nonimmigrant status
- Make sure to inform a DSO about your plans after completion

Cert/Associate/Bachelor Students	Master’s Students
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Common Questions

- What regulations apply to me as I complete my program?
- What are my options following program completion?
- As an April graduate, when does my grace period end?
- Am I eligible for OPT? What about the OPT extension?
- Am I eligible for an H-1B (work) visa?
- What are the important deadlines I need to know?
- What happens if I don't graduate in April as planned?
- How can I get more information?

Know the Regulation Governing F-1 Students

- *“An F-1 student who has completed a course of study and any authorized practical training following completion of studies will be allowed an additional 60-day period to prepare for departure from the United States...”*
- 60-day grace period for students graduating this April:
April 15, 2018 to June 13, 2018
- Only F-1 status extends for 60 days; current employment must stop no later than April 14, 2018.
- Travel outside and back into the U.S. is not permitted during the grace period

Not graduating? Extend your I-20 BEFORE it expires on April 14th!

□ F-1 Regulation:

“An F-1 student who is currently maintaining status and making normal progress toward completing his or her educational objective, but who is unable to complete his or her course of study by the program end date on the Form I-20, must apply prior to the program end date...”

Not graduating? Extend your I-20 BEFORE it expires!

- Check mid-term grades via **MyMonroe** app
- Tell your DSO as soon as you determine that you will not be graduating this semester
- Your program end date in SEVIS has been updated to April 14, 2018, so if you need more time to finish your degree, **you must extend your I-20 before April 14th**

Three Options Following Program Completion

- Apply for OPT (Optional Practical Training)
- Continue your studies as a full-time student in a new academic program
- Depart the United States

Post-Graduation Option 1: Apply for OPT

□ *"What is OPT?"*

- OPT = Optional Practical Training
- Work benefit designed to help international students gain valuable "in the field" career preparation and training in the U.S.
- 12-month full-time work permit ("OPT card")
- USCIS-administered program that requires a recommendation from Monroe College

Post-Graduation Option 1: Apply for OPT

- *"Who is eligible for OPT?"*
- Generally, undergraduate or graduate students who are:
 - lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis for one full academic year
 - maintaining F-1 status
 - seeking practical training directly related to their major area of study

Post-Graduation Option 1: Apply for OPT

- *“How much time do I have to get a job?”*
 - The 90-Day Rule: You must start working or volunteering for at least 20 hours a week within 90 days of your OPT start date
 - Unemployment beyond 90 days is a violation of status
 - Report your employment to your DSO to protect your status
 - Get help from Career Services at Monroe College

Post-Graduation Option 1: Apply for OPT

- *"What are some basics about OPT?"*
 - Any OPT employment must be directly related to your academic program and at least 20 hours per week
 - Beginning a new academic program cancels OPT
 - You get another 60-day grace period when OPT ends
 - You can apply for OPT with each higher education level, but you can't repeat it at the same educational level

Post-Graduation Option 1: Apply for OPT

- *Types of work that qualify as OPT:*
 - Regular paid employment
 - Multiple employers
 - Contract work
 - Self-employed business owner (with appropriate licenses)
 - Employment through an agency
 - Volunteering/Unpaid Internships

Post-Graduation Option 1: Apply for OPT

- *Be cautious about the volunteer or unpaid intern category!*

SEVP OPT Policy Guidance states that, "Students may work as volunteers or unpaid interns, where this practice does not violate any labor laws. The work should be at least 20 hours per week for students on post-completion OPT. A student should be able to provide evidence, acquired from the student's employer, to verify that he or she worked at least 20 hours per week during the period of employment."

Post-Graduation Option 1: Apply for OPT

□ *“Can I travel on OPT?”*

- Leaving the country while OPT is pending is risky --- you will be expected to have your OPT card AND a job offer letter to re-enter the U.S.
- Leaving the country while on OPT is also risky since you are considered out of status and/or not eligible for re-entry as an F-1 student if you have been unemployed for more than 90 days

Post-Graduation Option 1: Apply for OPT

- *“Am I still an F-1 student or a worker during OPT?”*
 - You are still a Monroe College student during OPT in the eyes of the U.S. Government, so you need to keep us updated with any changes to your:
 - ❖ Address
 - ❖ Phone number and email address
 - ❖ Employment status (got hired, changed jobs, etc.)

Post-Graduation Option 1: Apply for OPT

- *"How do I apply for OPT?"*
 - Print a copy of the OPT application packet from <https://www.monroecollege.edu/Practical-Training-for-F-1-Students/>
 - Read it carefully and complete the required forms
 - Submit the completed application to your DSO for review

Post-Graduation Option 1: Apply for OPT

- *"How do I apply for OPT?"*
 - Your DSO will provide you with a new Form I-20 recommending you for OPT employment and return your other forms to you
 - You send the completed application package, including the new Form I-20, \$410 application fee, and supporting documents to USCIS
 - If you need a *Social Security Number*, you can now apply for one together with your OPT application!

Post-Graduation Option 1: Apply for OPT

The best time to apply for OPT
is before **March 1st**!

What about STEM OPT? How does that work?

- Two additional years of OPT for a total of three years
- Must be a bachelor or master's graduate who **majored** in Information Technology, Computer Information Systems, or Computer Science. Public Health is not STEM-eligible.
- Must be working in a position directly related to your academic program and for an employer that is registered with the U.S. Government's **e-verify program**
- More info is available here: <https://www.uscis.gov/e-verify>

What about STEM OPT? How does that work?

- Apply for STEM OPT within 90 days of completing your first year of OPT; must apply before current OPT ends
- Work with your OPT employer to complete the Form I-983, Training Plan for STEM OPT Students
- Contact your DSO for a new I-20 with a recommendation for STEM OPT
- Submit your complete STEM OPT application and fee to USCIS within 90 days of the end of regular OPT
- More info at: <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/stem-opt-hub>

Post-Graduation Option 2: Enroll in a New Degree Program

- ❑ Reminder: starting a new academic program during OPT cancels your OPT; don't mix work and school
- ❑ Apply to another program at Monroe College and receive a new Form I-20
- ❑ Enroll in a program at another school and transfer your F-1 record in the SEVIS database

Post-Graduation Option 2: Enroll in a New Degree Program

- Enroll in another program at Monroe College
 - Apply to the academic program, per the normal process
 - Upon acceptance, apply for a new Form I-20 to match the new program
 - Make your payment and register for classes. You must have a zero balance for all of your prior studies.
 - If you meet deadlines, you can stay in the U.S. while you transition between programs

Post-Graduation Option 2: Enroll in a New Degree Program

- ❑ Enroll in a program at another school and transfer your F-1 record in the SEVIS database
 - ❑ Apply to the school you wish to attend
 - ❑ Upon acceptance, contact your Monroe College DSO to transfer your SEVIS record to your new school
 - ❑ Work with the new school to get a new Form I-20
 - ❑ If you meet deadlines, you can stay in the U.S. during the transfer process

Post-Graduation Option 3: Depart the U.S.

- ❑ Must depart the U.S. by the last day of the 60-day grace period, which is **June 13, 2018** for our April 2018 graduates
- ❑ F-1 status ends as soon as you leave the U.S. -- you may not re-enter the country during the 60-day grace period
- ❑ Please notify your DSO of your plans to leave and provide a copy of your flight itinerary

Wait.... What about H1-B?

Eligibility for the H-1B Work Visa

Understanding the H-1B Work Visa

- Work program for non-immigrant employees in "specialty occupations" with "highly specialized knowledge"
- Very competitive process
 - Demand for H-1Bs has surged due to improving economy and significant uptick in foreign students attending U.S. institutions
 - 975,000 foreign students studying in the U.S. in 2014-15...
a 78 percent increase from 2000
 - 124,000 employer-sponsored applications submitted in 2013; jumped to 233,000 shortly after

Understanding the H-1B Work Visa

- Visa permits people to work in the U.S. for up to six years
 - Employer sponsorship required
 - Allows temporary employment
- Awarded through a lottery
 - 65,000 available visa “slots” for foreign nationals with at least a bachelor's degree
 - Another 20,000 designated for those with advanced degrees from public or non-profit institutions

Understanding the H-1B Work Visa

- USCIS accepts H-1B applications on April 1st each year, but the window closes quickly
- Seek out a qualified attorney specializing in immigration law for assistance
- Monroe College undergraduate and graduate students are eligible to apply through the regular lottery

Know Your Deadlines

- **Before March 1:** Apply for OPT (*recommended*)
- **Before April 14:** Apply for extended Form I-20 if not graduating on time (*required*)
- **June 13:** Deadline to complete your post-graduation option (*required*)
 - Start OPT
 - Get a new I-20 for your next program
 - Transfer schools
 - Depart the U.S.

Know Where to Go for Help

- Visit DHS' "Study in the States" website
studyinthestates.dhs.gov
- Visit the Monroe College website
<https://www.monroecollege.edu/Practical-Training-for-F-1-Students/>
- Read the materials we provide
- Attend an F-1 Workshop
- Speak with your DSO

We're Here to Help!

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<p>Appointments are required.</p>	

Get your OPT application packet...

<https://www.monroecollege.edu/Practical-Training-for-F-1-Students/>

Or

Go to www.monroecollege.edu and enter *practical training* in the search bar